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SUBJECT: KUWAIT'S PARLIAMENTARY CRISIS MAY STALL LABOR BILL

REF: A. KUWAIT 101
[1](#)B. KUWAIT 161

[1](#)1. (U) During the March 3-5 session, Kuwait's National Assembly discussed the new labor bill (Ref A) but was unable to vote it into law due to a lack of quorum. The Assembly postponed the vote until March 17, the next scheduled session. However, supporters of the bill are now concerned that the bill's progress may be stalled by an expected grilling of the Prime Minister, a cabinet resignation, or parliamentary dissolution (Ref B).

[1](#)2. (U) A proposed amendment to the bill would require Kuwaiti companies applying for foreign worker visas to specify the exact number of workers they need and have the validity of this number confirmed by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor. During the March 4 session, twenty-one MPs voted in favor of this amendment and eighteen voted against it. MP Ahmed Al-Saadoun, the parliament's longest serving member and head of the Popular Action Bloc, supported the amendment. He argued that the current policy of allowing companies to provide their own, unverified estimate of how many foreign workers they need only encourages visa trading and human trafficking.

Background

[1](#)3. (U) On January 29, the parliament voted 43-0 to review a new labor bill which would increase foreign workers, annual leave and the amount of time required for notices of termination. On February 11, the National Assembly sent the bill back down to committee for amendments. Just before this March 3-5 session, the committee finished amending the bill and submitted it for the agenda.

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